



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## **Availability of Amendment 13 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Shrimp Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico**

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is seeking public comment on Amendment 13 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Shrimp Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) submitted Amendment 13 for review, approval, and implementation by the Secretary of Commerce.

Amendment 13 would revise federal permitting requirements for the shrimp fishery of the Gulf of Mexico exclusive economic zone (EEZ), including the establishment of a moratorium on the issuance of federal commercial shrimp vessel permits; revise existing regulations regarding reporting and recordkeeping in the shrimp fishery; and establish stock status criteria for the various shrimp stocks. For a complete description of the actions, please obtain a copy of Amendment 13 (see Addresses and Dates). The intended effect of Amendment 13 is to stabilize participation in the shrimp fishery of the Gulf of Mexico EEZ, and to provide better information by which to manage the fishery.

### **Royal Red Shrimp Fishery Permit Endorsement:**

Amendment 13 would establish a requirement for royal red shrimp vessels fishing in the Gulf of Mexico EEZ to possess a royal red shrimp endorsement to their Gulf of Mexico federal shrimp vessel permit. Specifically identifying royal red shrimp harvesters through a permit endorsement would provide the opportunity to gather needed biological, social, and economic data to appropriately manage this fishery.

### **Moratorium on Federal Penaeid Shrimp Vessel Permits:**

Amendment 13 proposes the establishment of a 10-year moratorium on the issuance of new federal shrimp vessel permits. If implemented, permits under the moratorium would be fully transferable, allowing permittees the flexibility to enter or exit the fishery as they choose. To be eligible for a commercial shrimp vessel permit under

the moratorium, vessels must have been issued a valid commercial shrimp vessel permit by NMFS prior to and including December 6, 2003. Additionally, an owner who sold his qualified vessel, had his qualified vessel repossessed, or otherwise lost use of his qualified vessel (i.e., damage, sinking, unaffordable repairs), but who obtained a valid commercial shrimp vessel permit for the same vessel or another vessel equipped for offshore shrimp fishing (at least 5 net tons) prior to the date of publication of the final rule implementing this amendment would be eligible to renew such permit under the moratorium.

### **Standardized Bycatch Reporting:**

Amendment 13 proposes to establish a standardized method to regularly monitor, report, and estimate the bycatch in the shrimp fishery of the Gulf of Mexico. A program would be established where a sample of federally-permitted shrimp vessels would be equipped with electronic logbooks (ELB) provided by NMFS, and a sample of federally-permitted shrimp vessels would carry observers. The ELB program would provide better information regarding effort, and the observer program would provide information on catch, effort, and bycatch. Amendment 13 also proposes to revise data collection requirements to include mandatory reporting of landings and vessel and gear characteristics.

### **Biological Reference Points and Stock Status Criteria:**

Amendment 13 proposes to establish or modify biological reference points (maximum sustainable yield and optimum yield) for brown, pink, and white shrimp, and stock status determination criteria (minimum stock size threshold and maximum fishing mortality threshold) for royal red shrimp.

A proposed rule that would implement measures outlined in Amendment 13 has been received from the Council. NMFS will publish the proposed rule in the

*Federal Register* for public review and comment.

**Addresses and Dates:**

Written comments must be received no later than 5 p.m., eastern time, on **January 23, 2006**. You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

- E-mail: 0648-AS15.NOA@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line the following document identifier: 0648-AS15-NOA.
- Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: Follow the instructions for submitting comments. <http://www.regulations.gov>
- Mail: Steve Branstetter, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.
- Fax: 727-824-5308, Attention: Steve Branstetter.

Copies of Amendment 13, which includes an Environmental Assessment, a Regulatory Impact Review, and an Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis, are available from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, Florida, 33607; phone: 813-348-1630; fax: 813-348-1711.

e-mail: [gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org](mailto:gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org)

Comments received by **January 23, 2006**, whether specifically directed to the amendment or the proposed rule, will be considered by NMFS in its decision to approve, disapprove, or partially approve the amendment. Comments received after that date will not be considered by NMFS in this decision. All comments received by NMFS on the amendment or the proposed rule during their respective comment periods will be addressed in the final rule.

NMFS is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, management and enforcement. NMFS provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

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